

THANK OFFERING TO BRITAIN LECTURE

THE GROWTH OF BRITISH ART HISTORY
AND ITS DEBTS TO EUROPE

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ANY English art historian of my generation is bound to feel even more embarrassed than flattered to be asked to give the 'Thank you to Britain' lecture. Our debt to the great scholars who were driven by tyranny to this country is so considerable that self-interest runs the risk of conflicting with moral outrage, and we are in danger of appearing to condone a crime that has been of such benefit to us. I myself was supervised by one such scholar (and Fellow of this Academy), the late Nikolaus Pevsner, and by far the greatest obligation of my intellectual life is to the Warburg Institute whose establishment in London in 1934 marks a decisive moment in the cultural history of Great Britain in the twentieth century. At one time I thought that I might devote this talk to an examination of that debt, but (for a number of reasons) I came to the conclusion that this would be impossible, and so (although I would like to dedicate this lecture to the Warburg Institute) I decided to turn back to an earlier century than our own to look at the impact of continental scholarship on English art history. But this necessarily involves the raising of somewhat different issues from those which I have so far mentioned. We will see that there were certainly some political refugees among the major scholars who came to England in the nineteenth century; but as art historians are not (despite their reputation) particularly obstreperous or controversial, and as nineteenth-century regimes had some way to go before they attained the level of brutality current in our own times, it would falsify my argument if I were to confine myself exclusively to

historians who were driven here by force. I want therefore to discuss the nature of the contribution made to the development of my profession by those foreign art historians who had particularly close relations with Great Britain: either because they came here in person or because their works were translated and hence familiar. This limitation is necessarily a distorting one—after all, many Englishmen interested in the arts were widely travelled, and many others could read foreign languages—and yet I hope that this limitation may in itself be able to tell us something of interest about the nature of British scholarship and its capacity, or otherwise, for absorbing foreign influences. Paradoxically, however, I have to begin by referring to an art historian whose links with Great Britain were only very tenuous.

Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity*, which is usually (and rightly) held to constitute a milestone in art historical studies, was published in German in 1764. This was a language that was then little known outside German-speaking countries, and the book was not to be fully translated into English for well over a hundred years. I am tempted to exaggerate by claiming that the essence of this lecture springs from the consequences—for better or for worse—of that long time lag. Winckelmann's masterpiece was, of course, quickly translated into French and Italian and thus became more easily accessible to English scholars, but it was used only as a source of information about the arts of ancient Greece and Rome (information which very soon went out of date), and not as the key to a new approach to studying the visual arts in general. The opening words of Winckelmann's preface explain the novelty of his book: 'This History of Ancient Art is not a simple chronological narrative of the changes it has undergone. I use the word "history" in its widest Greek sense, as it is my intention to propose here the outline of a system of the arts . . . For this reason the history of artists will play little part in it, and the reader will look in vain for the kind of historical information which is to be found in so many compilations. But I have taken great care to indicate those works of art which throw light on my subject'.¹ The implications of this move from the biographical tradition of writing art history to one based on theory, though (in Winckelmann's own case) a theory fully

¹ Johann Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, 2 vols. (Dresden, 1764), Vol. 1, pp. ix-x, and the translation of his preface into French in the important, and widely used, edition published in Paris (chez H. J. Jansen) in 1794, Vol. 1, p. xi.

grounded in direct observation, were of crucial importance, for they gave the subject not only a new methodology, but also an intellectual respectability which it had hitherto lacked. Though Winckelmann's personal taste would have made such a step impossible for him, the example he set could be applied as readily to medieval Paris or Renaissance Florence as to ancient Athens; and this was grasped by the Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Seroux d'Agincourt and the Italian Leopoldo Cicognara who, thanks to Winckelmann, were able to write superbly original and inventive volumes on medieval art and on sculpture, which were intended to carry on chronologically from the abyss of decadence where he had concluded his *History*—like, in his own moving words, a disconsolate lover who stands 'immobile on the sea shore following with her gaze the ship which is taking from her the love she can never see again'. But, in England, no imaginative response was inspired by Winckelmann—either by the self-confidence of his intellectual claims or by the quality of his despair—and the new century dawned without any theoretical framework for the construction of a valid history of art.

But not without art. Wars and revolutions throughout Europe led to a vast influx of pictures into this country at the very time that Seroux d'Agincourt and Cicognara were at work. In 1792 alone—by no means the most important year but the one for which the fullest records survive²—some 1470 paintings passed through the English customs from France, Flanders, Holland and Italy. There were surely masterpieces among them, but there were also huge quantities of insignificant works or copies or outright forgeries. No one could tell, because unlike what was happening in France and elsewhere in the Napoleonic Empire, where the carefully selected pictures which had been seized were transported to public museums, little remained visible, and after a brief stay in the auction houses, masterpieces and rubbish alike were swept off into the mansions of the aristocracy and gentry, either in London or in the remote countryside. Between 1801 and 1805 some ninety-four pictures said to be by Giorgione passed through the London sale rooms—not one of them would now be accepted as having been painted by him (in so far as they can be traced).³

² Burton B. Fredericksen (ed.), *The Index of Paintings Sold in the British Isles during the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1, '1801–1805, The Provenance Index of the Getty Art History Information Program' (Santa Barbara and Oxford, 1988), pp. xi–xii.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 315–18.

Owing to the uniquely English habit of holding regular Old Master Exhibitions, many pictures in private hands did, it is true, become accessible to connoisseurs for brief periods, but many did not, and it was not until the late 1820s that the full importance of private collections came to be adequately recognized, and that attempts were seriously made to take note of their contents, though a few handsomely-illustrated, but not very accurate, catalogues had already been published. The first man to tackle the problem was a very successful London picture dealer with the impeccably English name of John Smith, who, in 1829, produced the first of what ultimately became the nine volumes of his 'Catalogue Raisonné of the works of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters'. Smith travelled throughout Europe to compile this admirably ambitious and still very valuable descriptive list of all the Northern Old Masters of the seventeenth century; but as many of the pictures recorded by him had passed through his hands, his views on their quality and authenticity were hardly disinterested. In the words of one of his German critics, 'the power . . . of . . . deciding impartially upon the originality of such pictures, requires a situation in life less fettered than that of an English picture dealer, whose credit with his wealthy amateur patrons is at stake'.⁴ The man who passed this judgment was Johann David Passavant, and the ideally disinterested 'situation in life' at which he was hinting was his own; for in 1831, in preparation for his proposed *Life of Raphael* he undertook a Tour of England and Belgium to examine the contents of the public and private collections in those countries and to discuss the status of the arts in them. For the first, but by no means the last, time German scholarship was to clash with English commerce over the attributing of Old Master paintings.

In retrospect it seems surprising that the great flowering of German art history, which has always been so closely associated with theoretical innovation and which was to dominate the field since the 1820s (and will doubtless continue to do so until the last of Hitler's victims have ceased writing), should have opened with a commitment to the essential, but sometimes narrow and purely empirical discipline of connoisseurship—the more so as the roots of its two most eminent representatives Passavant and Gustav Friedrich Waagen lay deep in the soil of a specifically German form of sentimental Romanticism: Passavant was himself a

⁴ M[onsieur] Passavant, *Tour of a German artist in England*, 2 vols. 1836 [republished 1978], Vol. 1, p. 255.

painter and a spokesman for the Nazarenes who aimed to bring art back to the purity of the Age of Faith. They had much else in common: Waagen became director of the Royal Gallery in Berlin and Passavant of the Städel Institute in Frankfurt: both were protégés of the most original and creative art historian of the early nineteenth century, the Baron Carl Friedrich von Rumohr; and both became friends of Charles Lock Eastlake, who presided over the artistic life of England.⁵

Because Rumohr himself never came to England and because his works were never translated into English his place in this lecture can only be a marginal one, which in no way reflects the extraordinary fascination of the man or the brilliance of his achievement. It can only be said that, almost single-handed, he introduced two major innovations into art-historical study. He was, in the 1820s, the first scholar anywhere to show a serious and well-informed interest in those Italian painters who had lived before Raphael so that, for instance, he actually tried to distinguish which fourteenth-century pictures had been painted by Giotto and which by his pupils; and he pursued such investigations not by relying exclusively on the biographies of Italian artists which had been written by Vasari as late as the middle of the sixteenth century, but by checking—and often correcting—those biographies against a wide variety of published and unpublished sources. In these ways he put the connoisseurship of early Italian art on a completely new footing and introduced to it the same standards which other German writers had begun to use in the study of historical problems in general; but his example demonstrated how essential it was to have absolutely first-hand familiarity with the works of art themselves.

Eastlake, like Passavant, was a painter, and he spent fourteen years of almost uninterrupted life in Italy—where the two men met—between 1816 and 1830.⁶ But, unlike most of his contemporaries, he also learned German (as well as French and Italian) and he quickly developed into an exceedingly well-informed connoisseur whose expertise could match that of any of his contemporaries on the continent. Like his 'historical' pictures Eastlake's character strikes us as agreeable but rather bland, and he proved to be almost uncannily successful in getting on well

⁵ For a general survey of the German historians whose lives coincided with the period covered by this book see Wilhelm Waetzoldt, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1965).

⁶ For Eastlake see David Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World* (Princeton University Press, 1978).

with everyone of power and influence in England: he was a particular favourite of Prince Albert, and he shared that Prince's moving though slightly solemn hopes of stimulating self-improvement through an understanding of art. He was to be found on every committee concerned with the arts in this country, and he rose to become both President of the Royal Academy and Director of the National Gallery. He is now chiefly remembered as the best and most successful man ever to have held that post; but in the context of this talk he has to be recalled also as someone who, while operating within the very heart of the English establishment, was also the most cosmopolitan of art lovers. Eastlake was fully aware of the achievements of Rumohr and his followers, and it was he who edited the translation of the Italian chapters of Franz Kugler's *Handbook to the History of Painting from the Age of Constantine to the Present Time*, which was first published in Berlin in 1837 and which was the earliest and perhaps the most influential history of European art to be written anywhere. The edition used by Eastlake had been revised and prefaced by the great Jacob Burckhardt, so he too made his first English appearance under the auspices of Eastlake, and also—it is essential to add—of the publisher John Murray (the 3rd, the son of Byron's publisher), an extremely cultivated and widely travelled man who was himself familiar with German, and who was responsible not only for the famous guides to the principal European countries but also for the production of the great majority of serious art books of the middle years of the nineteenth century.

Almost everyone I will be talking about today was welcomed and supported in England by Eastlake and Murray, and it was probably Eastlake who encouraged both Passavant and Waagen (whom he had met in Berlin) to explore the art collections of Great Britain. Moreover, by a strange but apt coincidence, it was Eastlake's future wife, Elizabeth Rigby, who translated Passavant's *Tour* into English—'a much more slatternly translation it was never our lot to peruse' commented a reviewer in the *Athenaeum*⁷—just as, many years later, after her marriage, she was to translate Waagen's account of his visits to this country.

Attractive in character, although speaking incomprehensible

⁷ *Athenaeum*, 1836, pp. 458–9. The translation of Passavant's *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien* of 1833 appeared anonymously and omitted all the Belgian section. Lady Eastlake later translated Waagen's *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* (3 vols., 1854, and supplementary volume, 1857) but not his *Works of Art and Artists in England*, 3 vols., 1838.

English and considered to be eccentric in dress and behaviour (when staying with friends he would lock his bedroom door and hand the key to the butler),⁸ Passavant spent some nine months in England on his first visit. We find him in London and Norfolk, Oxford and Yorkshire, often in a considerable hurry, trying to bring the standards of the 'new connoisseurship' to a bemused aristocracy and to put some sort of order into their collections. But, of course, the difficulties presented by these were wholly different in kind from those which had faced his mentor Von Rumohr in Italy: there were only a few fourteenth and fifteenth-century pictures and none of them were still to be found in the churches or palaces for which they had been painted, nor was there any reliable archival evidence concerning the artists involved. However, Passavant largely invented and certainly introduced into this country a new style—or rather technique—of research, which was to last throughout the century and beyond: he published what were to all intents and purposes his working notes. Art-historical enquiry had hitherto relied principally on literary sources. Scholars studied their Vasari and then tried to discover the pictures he had mentioned. Passavant and his followers reversed the process. They moved from place to place tersely recording the pictures they had seen: only later did they, or others, relate these to what had been recorded in written texts. Some of Passavant's attributions now strike us as eccentric: thus he was the first art historian to look carefully at the Wilton Diptych (whose author is still unknown, though he is now generally believed to have been either an Englishman or a Frenchman working around 1400), and his suggestion that it must have been painted by a member of the school of Fra Angelico, probably Cosimo Rosselli, hardly constitutes a very helpful advance on the traditional reference to the diptych as a 'tabula antiqua'.⁹ But when writing on artists with whose style he was more familiar, such as Raphael, his comments were very much to the point and indeed constitute almost the first significant contribution to all later studies of the painter. And it is at least worth referring to his extremely important role in spreading information about modern British painters to the Continent: Turner, for instance, 'decidedly the most talented of all the living

⁸ Robertson (see note 6), p. 110. This refers to a later visit of Passavant to England.

⁹ Passavant (translated Elizabeth Rigby) *Tour* (see note 4), Vol. 1, pp. 302-3.

landscape painters', but extravagant and neglectful of form;¹⁰ or his English patron Eastlake whom he respected but found somewhat monotonous.

Hardly had Passavant left these shores before Waagen arrived—'my Germans', Lady Eastlake was later to call them¹¹—'clever, witty, full of mimicry and drollery'; and much better than Passavant at making himself understood. He went to the same collections but also to a great many more, and he was, in general, far more thorough and far more reliable—as was to be expected of a man who was familiar with the wonderful pictures which had already come, under his guidance, to the Berlin museum. Thus, although he too believed that the Wilton Diptych was by an Italian artist, he realized that it must date from well before the time of Cosimo Rosselli (who was active in the latter part of the fifteenth century), and after comparing it to the work of Orcagna and Taddeo di Bartolo he concluded that it was 'without doubt by a very able Italian painter who probably lived at the court of King Richard II'¹²—a classic example of the new art history for he knew of no Italian painter who had lived at the court of Richard.

In the 1850s Waagen made a number of visits to Britain, at Eastlake's invitation, and greatly extended his knowledge of collections—in Scotland, as well as in England: the four volumes which he devoted to them constitute the most complete attempt ever made to describe the pictures to be seen in this country, and it was compiled at the very moment when those collections had reached their peak as regards quality and quantity from which they soon began their almost uninterrupted and still-continuing slide. Waagen also described the many Graeco-Roman sculptures which he saw during his exploration of country houses, and it must have been his example which persuaded the young German archaeologist Adolph Michaelis to come to England in 1861, where twenty-one years later and after many further visits he published his massive and invaluable *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain*, whose long introductory essay on the formation of these

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 262.

¹¹ Robertson (see note 6), p. 110. For Waagen in England see also Frank Herrmann, 'Dr. Waagen's works of art and artists in England' *Connoisseur*, March 1966, pp. 173-7.

¹² G. F. Waagen, *Works of Art and Artists in England*, 3 vols. (London, 1838), Vol. 3, pp. 71-2; and also *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, 3 vols. (London, 1854), Vol. 3, pp. 150-1.

collections is not only by far the finest study of its kind ever made, but also a masterpiece of cultural history.

Waagen's contacts with England were not, however, confined to describing its art collections. As early as 1835, on his first visit, he was asked to give evidence before the parliamentary Committee of Arts and Manufactures on art education and the establishment of museums, and in 1851 he served on the jury for the Great Exhibition. It was even rumoured that the Prince Consort wished to have him made Director of the National Gallery.¹³ He also published a stream of articles, and the translation of his spirited essay on Rubens was edited by Mrs Jameson (herself an accomplished writer on the arts very well informed about developments in Germany) who explained that 'neither our English artists nor our English public are as yet accustomed to that *many-sided* and elevated spirit in criticism with which the Germans have long been familiar'.¹⁴ Above all it was Waagen (in collaboration with another German, George Scharf) who was put in charge of the Art Treasures Exhibition held in Manchester in 1857, which drew largely on the private collections earlier catalogued by him and which constituted what is probably the most remarkable exhibition of Old Masters that has ever been held anywhere. For four months the results of some two or three generations of (mainly) German scholarship and research were made visible to a million and a half visitors. Backed by the Prince Consort the organizers devoted one wall of one gallery '*exclusively* to Italian art; and on the opposite wall were ranged the paintings of the *foreign* nations to correspond as nearly as possible, in point of time, with the dates of the Italian ones facing them': thus an altar-piece by Cimabue confronted a copy of Van Eyck's Ghent altar-piece,¹⁵ Masaccio faced Memling, Leonardo and Raphael faced Holbein and Dürer, Titian faced Rubens, Murillo faced Rembrandt¹⁶ and so on. However, whatever people felt about the art of the so-called 'primitives', by no means everyone liked or even respected Waagen. Rossetti and Ruskin agreed that he was an 'ass', and to the American sculptor, William Wetmore Storey, he was 'the stupidest old plodder I ever heard; nothing at

¹³ Robertson (see note 6), p. 136.

¹⁴ Mrs Jameson (ed.), *Peter Paul Rubens, his life and genius*—translated from the German of Dr. Waagen by Robert R. Noel, Esq. (London, 1840), p. vi.

¹⁵ See Ulrich Finke, 'The Art-Treasures Exhibition' in *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 117–18.

¹⁶ See W. Bürger, *Trésors d'Art en Angleterre* (Paris, 1865, 3rd edn), p. 18.

all did he give us, but a series of facts, and in the most mumbling, slovenly manner . . .'¹⁷ It was not only the pedantry that was objected to—the apparent reduction of the poetry and spiritual values of art to questions of attribution. The prominence within the art world of England of Passavant, Waagen, Scharf and the Prince Consort gave rise to a ferocious wave of xenophobia which was to sweep away the most brilliant of all the German connoisseurs of the period. Otto Müндler had first visited England in 1837, very soon after Passavant and Waagen, and he too rapidly entered the circle of Eastlake who, in 1855, arranged for him to be appointed travelling agent for the National Gallery.¹⁸ For three years Müндler travelled throughout Italy filling his notebooks with brilliantly acute observations about pictures in churches and private collections and dealers' shops—observations which unlike those of Passavant and Waagen have only just been published. But, from the first, his appointment created an uproar—questions in Parliament, and articles in the Press such as this: 'Let the Nation remember that if the reason alleged for the appointment of Müндler, viz., that we have no *Englishman* fit for the office, be true, the whole people of England are branded with wretched ignorance of Art, as well as with absence of taste and appreciation, and do not deserve to have a single masterpiece in their possession . . .', and this: 'We have yet to learn anything about Herr Müндler that justifies his appointment. It seems as if there was a tribe of courtiers amongst us who think that their loyalty is proved by adulterating British institutions with a constant admixture of the GERMAN ELEMENT'. In 1858 he was dismissed.

We have seen that Passavant and Waagen diluted expression of their original feeling for the art of the so-called 'primitives' in the interests of their impartial cataloguing. And, in fact, the standard-bearer in England during the 1830s and 1840s of the full German emotionalism from which they had freed themselves

¹⁷ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Letters*, ed. Oswald Doughty & John Robert Wahl, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1965–7), Vol. 1, p. 208 (1854); John Ruskin, *The Diaries*, selected and ed. by Joan Evans & John Howard Whitehouse, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1956–9), Vol. 1, p. 249 (1843); Henry James, *William Wetmore Storey and his friends—from letters, diaries and recollections*, in two volumes (combined) (originally published 1903, reprinted Thames and Hudson), Vol. 1, p. 214 (1850).

¹⁸ See ed. and indexed by Carol Togneri Dowd, *The Travel Diaries of Otto Müндler, 1855–1858* introduction by Jaynie Anderson (The Walpole Society, 1985, Vol. 51).

proved to be a devout Catholic Frenchman, Alexis-François Rio, who had travelled extensively in Italy, and who was a very frequent visitor to Germany, which was always his spiritual home.¹⁹ But partly because he married an English woman (or, rather, a Welsh woman) he spent some ten years or so in London, where he was in close touch with Macaulay, Carlyle, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Gladstone and many other leading literary figures. He also knew the connoisseurs we have been talking about, but he constantly stressed that a true understanding of art only began at the point where connoisseurship ended. The usual histories of art were 'very interesting no doubt', but they were superficial: it was the emotions rather than the surface which had to be considered. What he admired above all in his special mentor and hero Rumohr was that this 'discoverer of a new world', this 'missionary' had not only studied 'art in itself, as a special manifestation of human genius . . . but also in its relationship with other such manifestations, especially philosophy and poetry'.²⁰ Mündler, on the other hand, wrote about Rio's study of Leonardo da Vinci that it was 'written too hastily, without critic [sic] and without sufficient study of the works of this great artist, his scholars, imitators, followers and contemporaries'.²¹ It can be seen at once that we are faced here with two quite different attitudes to art, and if Passavant, Waagen and Mündler were in the Eastlake camp, Rio was among the spiritual forbears of Ruskin (whose debt to Rio was certainly greater than he was always ready to acknowledge).²² Even before it was translated into English in 1854, Rio's *De la poésie chrétienne*, published in 1836, sold very much better in London than it did in Paris.²³ In this eloquent, wrong-headed and often perceptive book, which owed much to the Germans but which also contained many fresh and original observations, Rio insisted on the central importance of a mystical Christian inspiration for the flourishing of Italian art which had come to an end (destroyed by paganism and

¹⁹ Apart from Rio's extensive writings see Sister Mary Camille Bowe, *François Rio—sa place dans le renouveau catholique en Europe (1797-1874)* (Paris, n.d.).

²⁰ Rio, A-F., *Epilogue à l'Art Chrétien*, 2 vols., Paris 1870, Vol. 2, pp. 111, 112, 121.

²¹ Mündler (see note 19), p. 196.

²² See Adèle M. Holcomb, 'A-F. Rio, Anna Jameson and some sources of the second volume of *Modern Painters* by Ruskin (1846)', in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1978), pp. 35-8.

²³ Bowe (see note 18), p. 196.

materialism) even before Raphael reached maturity. At a time when Ruskin had hardly yet come to Oxford as a student of seventeen and Walter Pater was not even born, Rio singled out the particular qualities of Fra Angelico and Carpaccio and Botticelli (the faces of whose Madonnas were 'nearly always veiled in sadness') and, above all, he proclaimed the supreme merits of Sieneese, Umbrian, and especially Venetian art at the expense of the Florentines, who were always liable to fall into the trap of materialism.

The crushing of the revolutions that had erupted during the year 1848 in many parts of Europe brought to London at least three art historians among many thousands of refugees of all kinds—one German, one French and one Italian. They remained in this country for very varying periods and made very varying impacts, but there can be no doubt at all that the one who was most famous at the time is the one whose scholarly achievements have been most forgotten. Gottfried Kinkel, poet, theologian and for many years close friend of Burckhardt, had since 1846 been professor of art history and cultural history at the University of Bonn where he wrote a short volume on early Christian art and where his lectures on early Netherlandish painting thrilled huge audiences.²⁴ He was threatened with the death penalty and then sentenced to hard labour for life for his revolutionary activities, and his case attracted enormous international attention which was intensified when he made a sensational escape from the fortress of Spandau and fled to England. Here the good looks and self-dramatization which led the cultivated public—and, especially cultivated women—to forgive him for his (not very extreme) left wing opinions brought down upon him the most scathing mockery from Marx.²⁵ Kinkel lectured extensively in England—to English audiences as well as to German communities scattered through the country—and in 1853 he could scarcely begin his series on Christian art in the Middle Ages because of the endless cheering which greeted his appearance from the five hundred people who had crowded into the auditorium of University College, London. It was, indeed, Kinkel's

²⁴ See, for all this section, Wolfgang Beyrodt, *Gottfried Kinkel als Kunsthistoriker—Darstellung und Briefwechsel* (Bonn, 1979) (which, however, barely discusses the English period); also W. Kaegi's biography of Jacob Burckhardt; and Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution-Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt, 1979).

²⁵ For Marx, Kinkel and the other German exiles in England see Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany* (Oxford, 1986).

ambition to be appointed Professor of Aesthetics at London University—but no such post existed. Kinkel was not a connoisseur, like the earlier German art historians who had come to London, and he seems to have had few if any contacts with Eastlake or his circle, though he was very well received in general: thus George Grote, the great historian of Greece, was among those who very nearly succeeded in the amazing venture of getting him appointed to the Chair of *English* language and literature at University College, London. Kinkel also tried to get a position as lecturer on ornamental art at the School of Design, but this too came to nothing despite the fact that he was able to enlist the help of the architect Gottfried Semper, another German political exile with art historical interests, though one who was—at this time—primarily interested in the practice of design. Although Semper played a part in organizing the International Exhibition of 1851 and, in the following year, in planning the funeral carriage of the Duke of Wellington, the theoretical and historical conclusions which he drew from these and other experiences were only published, in German, after his departure from England to the Polytechnic of Zurich, and it was not until the twentieth century that they attracted much attention here.²⁶

Meanwhile Kinkel had to confine his art historical activities to the giving of private classes and to teaching at a number of newly-founded colleges for women students. He wrote no book while in England, and in 1866 (after a stay of fifteen years) he left to take up the post of Professor of Archaeology and Art History also at the Zurich Polytechnic, the chair which, ten years earlier, had been held by Jacob Burckhardt. This fact alone would make it worth referring to the failure of his London plans, because it can give us an idea of what were the limits within which German art historians had to work in this country. Kinkel's publications, dating from both before and after his English exile, do not convey the impression of a great mind though they are certainly of scholarly interest. What really made him unique among the foreign art historians who came to Great Britain in these years (and what causes one to regret his not having been given the university career which he wanted) is one

²⁶ See Wolfgang Hermann, *Gottfried Semper im Exil—Paris, London 1849–1855: zur Entstehung des 'Stil', 1840–1877* (Basel und Stuttgart, 1978); Jolande Nigro Covre, 'Babele nel "vuoto coperto di vetro": Gottfried Semper e la grande esposizione di Londra nel 1951', *Ricerche di Storia dell'Arte*, no. 18 (1982), pp. 5–20; Leopold Ettlinger, 'The Duke of Wellington's Funeral Car', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 3 (1939–40), pp. 254–9.

phrase to be found in the preface to the volume of his papers (some based on what he had seen in England) which was published in Berlin in 1876—and, of course, never translated: ‘If one always declares merely who has painted what and how it has been painted, art history will remain one-sided: its relationship to life and to its background in the history of culture can only be illuminated if we also consider what has been painted and at what specific time new themes have entered the realm of painting’.²⁷ Only one of the refugees who came here in these years began to think about such issues during his time in England, and he was a Frenchman.

Théophile Thoré, who had been born in 1807, had indeed taken part in just about every revolution that had occurred during his lifetime—in 1830, in 1848, and then again during the ‘June days’ of 1849; and in between revolutions he had spent a year in prison for subversive activities in 1842.²⁸ He was a disciple of Saint Simon and of Pierre Leroux, and he applied the generous, optimistic, sentimental (and also extremely nationalist) convictions, so common in left wing circles before 1848, to the art criticism which, along with politics, was the main concern of his life and which had already begun to earn him a certain fame. But, unlike so many writers who have shared his beliefs (both at the time and since), Thoré’s deep sensitivity to art and his intellectual integrity saved him from assigning praise or blame according to some pre-ordained programmatic system: indeed the humane frankness with which he reveals the conflicts between his taste and his ideals makes him one of the most appealing and rewarding of all nineteenth-century writers on the arts. On his first two visits to London after his flight from Paris in 1849 Thoré was almost exclusively concerned with the ‘flat ephemeral pamphlet’ and the other political problems faced by exiles (Kinkel among them) living in a quarrelsome world which was described with poignancy and mordant humour by Alexander Herzen.²⁹ But by 1857 when he came back to an England

²⁷ Gottfried Kinkel, *Mosaik sur Kunst-geschichte*. (Berlin, 1876), p. vii.

²⁸ The most recent full-scale study of Thoré is Frances Suzman Jowell’s *Thoré-Bürger and the art of the past* (Harvard, 1971) published by Garland 1977. Mrs Jowell is now writing a full-scale biography of Thoré, and I am most grateful for her guidance and help.

²⁹ Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, 4 vols, London 1968. See Part VI: ‘England, 1852–55’ (in Vol. 3), *passim*. Herzen refers to Thoré only once in passing, but he writes at some length (pp. 1156–60) about Kinkel, ‘one of the heads of the forty times forty schisms in London’. Herzen defends him

(which he never much liked), after wandering around the Continent under a series of pseudonyms, he had resumed his artistic interests, and for him as for Engels, it was Manchester which marked a turning point in his life—though of a very different kind. Even as an art critic in the '30s and '40s Thoré had shown an interest in earlier painting as well as in that of his contemporaries, and this had developed strongly once he was cut off from France and was given the chance to visit the museums of Belgium, Holland and Germany. But it was the Exhibition of Old Masters in Manchester which really transformed his whole outlook. Even Waagen, he pointed out, had seen only a fraction of the artistic riches in England: 'and yet no Englishman has seen as much as he has. No one knows what England possesses in the way of pictures, sculptures, metal work, cameos, ivories, enamels, engravings, etc. . . . If one day an inventory were to be made of the collections imprisoned in the town and country houses of the English aristocracy it would be the most useful possible contribution one can imagine to the history of art'. To that extent Thoré was following in the well-trodden path of Passavant, and especially of Waagen with whom he remained in close touch and whose volumes he thought of translating;³⁰ but in fact his own published notes on the Manchester Exhibition were more penetrating than anything they had written and—unlike Passavant and Waagen—he can still be read for pleasure and for valuable insights as well as for information.

For at Manchester Thoré was inspired by the 'excellent innovation of dividing the masters into two great parallel schools, that of the South and that of the North' (an arrangement which may well have seemed pedantic to others) not to resurrect his own nationalist theories but, on the contrary, to proclaim the absolute necessity of writing a history of art which should embrace Europe as a whole rather than one based on national schools. A year earlier he had ostentatiously rejected his French chauvinism by changing his name from Théophile Thoré to William Bürger: now he wrote that 'a general history of art seems

against his jealous enemies, and his portrait of him is sympathetic, if a little ironical: 'I always marvelled that the majestic head of a Zeus had found itself on the shoulders of a German professor, and how a German professor had found himself first on the field of battle and then, wounded, in a Prussian prison; but perhaps the oddest thing of all is that all this *plus* London did not change him in the least, and he remained a German professor . . .'.³⁰

³⁰ *Thoré-Bürger peint par lui-même—lettres et notes intimes publiées par Paul Cottin* (Paris, n.d.), p. 173.

to conform to the tendency and moods of modern civilisation: national monographs are no longer enough'. He himself did not produce such a history (though he had hoped to), but—breaking with, or at least amplifying, the precedents established by Passavant and Waagen—he wrote an account of what he saw at Manchester which extended far beyond reportage and which sparkled with ideas of all kinds about the history of art in general. Of these by far the most fruitful was his complete reinterpretation of Dutch painting. He had already been moving in this direction for some time, but it was the superb quality of the Dutch pictures shown at Manchester which persuaded him to take the decisive step. Dutch art had, of course, long been collected—in France, Germany and England as well as in Holland—but always rather apologetically, as something essentially of the second rank compared to the great masters of Italy. Inspired by his democratic convictions, Thoré-Bürger wholly rejected the notion that painting which depicted 'ordinary' people need be in any way inferior to painting which depicted gods or kings; and inspired by his real understanding of quality he insisted on that hierarchy of the Dutch masters—Hals, Rembrandt and especially, Vermeer—which came to be accepted not long after his death and which has survived ever since, while at the same time he also singled out the superb achievements of Pieter de Hooch, Jan Steen and many more. In fact it was due to Thoré-Bürger and the impact on him of the Manchester Exhibition that Dutch seventeenth-century painting acquired its rank as one of the greatest of European schools—in Thoré's own eyes certainly the greatest.

Of course, the full consequences of his enthusiastic and perceptive notes needed some years before they could be developed with the backing of the most careful research and a series of incomparable catalogues whose virtues have rightly been compared to those of Burckhardt's *Cicerone*.³¹ No Vermeer, for instance, was exhibited at Manchester, although Queen Victoria owned a beautiful picture by him—*A Lady at the Virginals with a Gentleman*—which had been wrongly attributed by Waagen to E. van der Neer. However, as this was hung at Windsor, it was not seen by Thoré when he spent four hours studying the royal collection at Buckingham Palace.³²

³¹ Jacob Rosenberg, *On quality in art—criteria of excellence, past and present: the A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 1964* (Washington, 1967), p. 70—quoted by Jowell (see note 28) p. 240.

³² Christopher White, *The Dutch Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 143–5.

In the volume which was made up of his articles on the 1857 exhibition,³³ Thoré pointed out that 'the English school does not yet exist as far as art history on the continent is concerned', and to remedy this he himself wrote a series of brief, and usually admiring, appraisals of the leading painters from Hogarth to Turner. But his book was not translated into English—though it was reviewed. However, the mere fact that Thoré had access to Buckingham Palace is enough to demonstrate that this former political prisoner and refugee on the run had good connections in London, and it will hardly be necessary for me to say that Thoré too was befriended by Eastlake. Indeed, the two men exchanged information about putative Vermeers, and by the early 1860s Eastlake was hoping that Thoré, who like most connoisseurs of the period was also a part-time dealer, would be able to find a 'perfect' Vermeer for the National Gallery. The deaths of Eastlake in 1865 and of Thoré four years later put an end to these hopes, but when long afterwards first one, and then another, Vermeer did enter the Gallery both had come from Thoré's collection.³⁴

Neither the magnetic enthusiasm of Thoré nor the glamorous exhibitionism of Kinkel seriously impinged on the study of art history in England; but another political refugee who arrived in London at much the same time as they did—whose modesty was almost pathological and whose literary style was pedestrian even by the not very demanding standards of the profession—helped to transform the subject, not only in this country but throughout Europe. Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle was within his severely restricted field—the identification of Italian pictures between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries—something of a genius, and his partnership with Joseph Arthur Crowe (their books were published under their joint names, in England as Crowe and Cavalcaselle, in Italy as Cavalcaselle and Crowe) meant that, for the first time, an Englishman became universally known in the world of international art history.³⁵

The two men had first met by accident, in a coach on the way

³³ W. Bürger (see note 16).

³⁴ See André Blum, *Vermeer et Thoré-Bürger* (Genève, 1946), pp. 158–9; and Robertson (see note 6), pp. 224–5.

³⁵ See now Donata Levi, *Cavalcaselle—il pioniere della conservazione dell'arte* (Torino, 1988); and also Donata Levi, 'Fortuna di Morelli: appunti sui rapporti tra storiografia artistica tedesca ed inglese', in *G. Morelli—Studi e Ricerche* (Bergamo, 1987), pp. 19–54. As will be evident, I have drawn very heavily on these major contributions to the study of art history, and not only for my discussion of Cavalcaselle.

(inevitably one feels) to Berlin. The year was 1847; Crowe was a journalist aged twenty-two, who was planning to write a book about Van Eyck, and Cavalcaselle was a student of pictures, aged twenty-seven or twenty-eight (even his date of birth is not known for certain). Both had trained as painters for a short time and both were gifted draughtsmen. By chance they met again on the following day while waiting for the museum to open. When it did, Cavalcaselle turned left towards the Italians, Crowe right towards the Flemish. Each briefly tried to persuade the other to change direction. And then they separated.

A year later Cavalcaselle took part in the rising against the Austrians in North Italy and, like Kinkel (at much the same time), he faced a sentence of death but escaped. Further adventures followed, and eventually he arrived in Paris in the summer of 1849. There, one evening in the Place Notre Dame des Victoires, he suddenly bumped into Crowe, who was on his way home from the office where he was working as a foreign correspondent for the *Daily News*: from then on their names have never again been separated. In London Cavalcaselle was introduced to Eastlake, and through him to Passavant, Waagen, George Scharf and Müндler, and he quickly made a striking impression on this group of Anglo-German connoisseurs which had hitherto dominated the scene. It would be impossible here even to summarize Cavalcaselle's achievements as a 'pure' attributionist, and it need only be said that his opinions on authorship, on restorations, on the physical conditions of pictures and so on are still regularly consulted and cited. I must try rather to indicate how his particular gifts and temperament, and also his association with Crowe, did introduce a new element into the situation of art history in this country; but before I do so, I must stress that (for better or for worse) Cavalcaselle was by inclination an old-fashioned connoisseur of what I have called the 'Anglo-German school'—that is to say he derived particular satisfaction from visiting collections of all kinds and then trying to decide who had painted the pictures which he saw in them. To do this he relied on a powerful visual memory—helped by a real gift for making quick and informative sketches—but his approach was entirely empirical and he showed no interest in theory, nor did he have any talent for description or evocation. In all this he was the opposite of his almost exact contemporary, rival and eventually enemy Giovanni Morelli, a brilliantly gifted and arrogant writer with a sound training in anatomy, who aimed to put connoisseurship on a more 'scientific' basis. Morelli

claimed that the true way to recognize the hand of an artist was to concentrate not on his own overall compositions, which tended to be the result of convention, and not on one's own feelings, which were always subjective, but on those features in the painter's work—such as the shape of an ear—which were characteristic of him only and which were therefore revealing precisely because they were created almost unconsciously. The 'Morellian method' was to fascinate Berenson and Freud, and philosophically minded historians ever since, and was to be taken up by many English connoisseurs, but Crowe and Cavalcaselle found it absurd, even though Cavalcaselle had long been aware of the importance of studying details.

What Cavalcaselle did for connoisseurship was to introduce the concept of the 'minor artist'. As I have already hinted, during the seventeenth, and especially the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, almost all Italian paintings had been assigned to those great masters—Raphael, Correggio, Giorgione, Titian, Guido Reni and so on—whose names had been cherished in the early literature; and although the generation of connoisseurs associated with Passavant and Waagen had looked critically at many of these attributions and had often had the courage to challenge them, they had only been able to put in their place such generic terms as 'clearly not by the master himself' or 'evidently of a later date'. But when Cavalcaselle read the early sources he realized that vastly greater numbers of artists—whose names had been wholly forgotten—had produced works than Raphael, Correggio, Giorgione and so on, and that they must have been responsible for many of the pictures which he saw on his travels in England and elsewhere. I cannot help feeling that Cavalcaselle's own retiring modesty may have made some of these forgotten artists especially congenial to him: at any rate by bringing them within the range of art historical enquiry he inaugurated an approach to Italian painting which was at first to be enthusiastically endorsed by connoisseurs such as Morelli's disciple Bernard Berenson. We can recall his famous words that 'here at Bergamo, and in all the fragrant and romantic valleys that branch out northward, we must not stop till we are sure that every Lotto is a Lotto, every Cariani a Cariani, every Previtali a Previtali and every Santa Croce a Santa Croce; and that we know to whom of the several Santa Croces a picture is to be attributed'³⁶—all painters, incidentally, who had been seriously

³⁶ Bernard Berenson, *Sketch for a Self-Portrait* (London, 1949), p. 51.

discussed for the first time by Cavalcaselle. And although Berenson himself was later to repudiate this attitude,³⁷ it has characterized much art history ever since.

In London John Murray proposed what might have been the perfect task for Cavalcaselle—an annotated edition of the two versions of the *Lives of the most excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* by Vasari, published in 1550 and 1568. In theory nothing should have been more congenial—or more in keeping with that critical investigation of sources which had been inaugurated by German art historians some fifty years earlier but barely followed up since in England. In practice the project was not fulfilled—in part because Crowe strongly discouraged it. Crowe wanted to collaborate with Cavalcaselle on a series of large books: they had begun with a work on the Flemish painters—it is wholly characteristic of their relationship that it was Crowe who (you will remember) had turned right when they had first entered the Berlin museum, should have had his way first—and they continued with a series of hefty volumes on Italian art. Their gifts matched so perfectly that it is pointless to try to set the achievements of the one against those of the other, as has so often been done. Without the ambition, the breadth of vision and, even the coarseness, of ‘the rapturous’ Crowe, the morbidly timid and ‘cautious’ Cavalcaselle (the adjectives are Ruskin’s)³⁸ would surely have confined himself to making scattered (though doubtless invaluable) notes on the pictures he saw. It was Crowe who helped to shape those observations into organized narratives such as *A New History of Painting in Italy from the Second to the Sixteenth century* (dedicated, appropriately enough, to Eastlake) and a *History of Painting in North Italy*, and into biographies of Titian and Raphael which set wholly new standards for the history of art in general and which are, moreover, of quite particular significance in the context of my talk today. To appreciate this we must compare the consequences of Cavalcaselle’s researches in England with those of the other foreign scholars I have talked about.

Although few attitudes to art history are quite so misguided as the sneers, and indeed the actual hatred, so frequently directed against the very notion of connoisseurship, it must be admitted

³⁷ Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1932), pp. iii–v.

³⁸ John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence* (Library Edition of the Complete Works, Vol. XXIII, p. 338).

that the kind of connoisseurship inspired by the great collections of England was open to the serious objection not so much that (for obvious reasons) it was often far too optimistic in tone, as that it was arbitrary and appeared to be wholly self sufficient. It is true that Passavant made direct and fruitful use of his studies in such collections in order to write an account of the life of Raphael which included a catalogue *raisonné* of his works—the very first example of the sort of monograph which is now so conventional as itself to attract contempt and hostility in some quarters: but it is alas significant that, despite its acknowledged importance, Passavant's *Raphael* was not translated into English until nearly forty years after it first appeared. Similarly Thoré's notes on the Manchester Exhibition which radically reassessed the leading Dutch painters were published in the French and not the English journals. But thanks to the pressures of Crowe (and also the support of Eastlake and Murray) the *New History of Painting in Italy* and the other works written jointly by him and Cavalcaselle were of course first published in England and in English, and they thus for the first time gave this country a reputation in the field of art history second only to that of Germany: indeed not only were the books themselves to be translated into German (as well as into Italian)—but so even were Crowe's rather garrulous Reminiscences.

Thus art history in this country was fundamentally affected by the arrival here of foreign scholars—whose own lives and careers were also to be fundamentally affected by the particular challenge presented by the existence of what, once upon a time, appeared to be inexhaustible private collections: indeed, until very recent years British connoisseurship retained the remarkable prestige it had acquired in the wake of Crowe and Cavalcaselle—or Cavalcaselle and Crowe. But what was absorbed from the Continent was very limited and Mrs Jameson's observation, made as early as 1840, that the public was not yet accustomed to that '*many-sided* and elevated spirit in criticism with which the Germans have long been familiar' remained true for many generations—though it is only fair to point out that the investigations into religious iconography which she herself began to undertake in 1842 represented a serious, if somewhat timid, attempt to absorb many new developments (especially French ones) in the field.

My survey has necessarily been brief and hurried, but it will surely be accepted that not many historians in this country were bothered by Kinkel's implied reproach to his British hosts that

'the relationship [of art] to life and to its background in the history of culture can only be illuminated if we . . . consider what has been painted and at what specific time new themes have entered the realm of painting'. For a full appreciation of just what is implied by that and the many similar questions, which were eagerly discussed in Germany and elsewhere, we had to wait for the arrival of those great Continental scholars whose relationship with this country is commemorated in the creation of the lecture which I have just had the honour to give.